

CONSTRUCTION, SANITATION, AND HYGIENE

IN CHARGE OF
M. E. P. DAVIS

To the majority of the nursing profession, as well as to the non-professional masses, we may venture to say that the important subjects to be treated in this department from their very nature are almost fallow ground.

Having to do largely with scientific research and experiment, writers for scientific or professional journals have heretofore gone quite over the heads of ordinary mortals, or their explanations are too deep and intricate to be easily understood or applied by them.

It is our aim and purpose to give our readers papers by well-known authorities, demonstrating the possibilities of their theories and research by scientific and practical tests, reduced to their simplest, most comprehensible, and most practicable forms. The construction, sanitation, and hygiene of all places where people pass their waking hours or sleep; the home, the hospital, the prison, the factory, the school, the public bath, the street, the storage of foods, the housing of domestic animals,—everything that has a bearing, direct or indirect, on the health, character, comfort, or happiness of the people,—will be discussed, demonstrated, and their practical possibilities made known through these columns.

Primarily the enlightenment of the profession was the moving cause of the establishment of this department, but we claim for it in no way a monopoly of this enlightenment, our intention being to benefit the layman equally with the nurse.

THE BROOKLINE, MASSACHUSETTS, ISOLATION HOSPITAL

By H. LINCOLN CHASE, M.D.

THE present hospital, one of the pioneers of its kind in the towns and smaller cities of this country, consists of a two-story building for small-pox patients, a building for diphtheria patients, also one for scarlet-fever patients.

Before this description appears in print, however, an additional wooden building for convalescents from diphtheria will be in use.

The small-pox building, for which Dr. George K. Sabine drew the sketch plans, was hastily put up during an outbreak that occurred nearly twenty years ago, but it was not used until the winter of 1893-94, when two patients were taken there. It consists of two large rooms for patients, a kitchen, and a small bedroom. About six patients could be comfortably accommodated, but no one claims for it any special hospital features.

In 1894 the town recognized the importance of providing for the prompt and complete isolation of cases of diphtheria and of scarlet fever, and accordingly, at the annual town meeting, it voted to appropriate five thousand dollars asked for by the Board of Health to construct suitable buildings for the isolation and care of persons ill with dangerous contagious diseases. Under this vote the board constructed, in one of the least densely populated parts of the town, two buildings, a safe distance apart and sufficiently remote from all other buildings. They were placed on high ground, in a location of considerable natural beauty, and with space about them for the erection of additional buildings in the future. Dr. Abbott, secretary of the State Board of Health, who visited the proposed site with the writer, said the town was to be congratulated on owning so desirable a lot of land for such a purpose.

The Building Committee consisted of Messrs. Horace James and Tucker Daland, of the Board of Health, and the writer. Expecting that the hospital would very seldom be needed, and then for but very few patients, no architect was employed, and two fairly comfortable little hospitals, of very simple design, were built. The buildings are of wood, single story, pavilion style, each having two small four-bed wards, with a hallway through the middle of the building, a bedroom for the nurses, a kitchen, cellar, and attic, and can each comfortably accommodate eight patients, if mostly children; in warm weather, however, when it has seemed absolutely necessary, a larger number has been taken care of, but never consistently with the best welfare of the patients. This has been found especially true when a number of the patients were adults. The buildings were planned with attention to securing natural ventilation and abundant sunlight in every room. The walls are plastered and covered with Windsor cement, and all the rooms have open fireplaces, but rely for additional heating on small stoves in each room. There are ample uncovered piazzas and a small separate building that serves for the storing of fresh clothing and also for the sheltering of the formaldehyde disinfecting cabinet and the ambulance.

At one end of the scarlet-fever pavilion are two rooms wholly

separated from the rest of the building. One of these can serve as a probation ward and the other as its kitchen, or both can be, and, in fact, have been, used for an overflow of diphtheria patients, each room accommodating four or five children. These hospitals, though not constantly needed, are kept ready for almost immediate use, and have proved extremely valuable for the prompt isolation and proper care of cases of diphtheria and scarlet fever appearing in crowded tenements and in boarding-houses, not to mention quite a number of domestics and other adult patients.

In the diphtheria epidemic, however, of a year ago, these accommodations proved so unequal to the demands upon them, that steps were taken to provide a hospital that in every respect should meet the requirements in a threatened or actual epidemic, in a town of the population and character of Brookline.

A committee was appointed consisting of Messrs. James and Merrill, of the Board of Health, with its bacteriologist, Dr. Francis P. Denny, and the writer, to consider and report on the needs of the hospital.

On the request of the two medical members of the committee, the board authorized them to consult with Dr. John H. McCollom, superintendent of the Contagious Department of the Boston City Hospital, as to the requirements of such a well-planned hospital as they proposed to have built, and from him suggestions of much value were received. They also visited the contagious hospitals of Boston, Worcester, Cambridge, Newton, and other places, and gathered considerable practical knowledge of the subject before submitting to the architect the sketch plans of the committee for the new buildings.

Within recent years, as the readers of this publication are aware, the principles of hospital construction, and especially of those for infectious diseases, have undergone radical changes, and the need has become recognized of special knowledge for their successful arrangement and construction, if the best welfare of the patients, and, indirectly, that of the whole community, is to be secured.

At present the diphtheria hospital and the probation ward and its kitchen are occupied by twenty-one diphtheria patients and attendants, while two or three patients in a crowded tenement district are on the waiting list. Mrs. Bertha A. Ellis is acting as head nurse, and is assisted by Mrs. Lord and Miss Doolin.

When the architect's plans and specifications for the new buildings, in which are being incorporated everything requisite in such a hospital, have been completed and accepted by the town, another cut and description of Brookline's Isolation Hospital, the writer believes, will be of much greater interest and value than what is here presented.